

VZCZCXYZ2793
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGB #0661/01 0652050
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 052050Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6080
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000661

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT KIRKUK: NEGOTIATIONS TO END TURKMAN BOYCOT OF
PROVINCIAL COUNCIL CONTINUE

REF: A) BAGHDAD 586 B) BAGHDAD 660

Classified By: PRT Kirkuk Team Leader Howard Keegan for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Kirkuk reporting cable.

SUMMARY

12. (C) The Kirkuk Brotherhood List (KBL) met with the Turkman Bloc on March 2 to continue discussions on a resolution to the Turkman Bloc's boycott of the Kirkuk Provincial Council. The KBL arrived prepared to sign on five of the seven points, but negotiations slowed when the two parties could not reach agreement on the remaining two points. On a positive note, negotiations were considerably more constructive without the presence of Ali Mahdi (Turkman Bloc), who was considered to be an obstructionist by members of both blocs during the first round of negotiations. The next session is scheduled for March 6. END SUMMARY.

NO SETTLEMENT; NEXT NEGOTIATION MEETING SET

13. (C) The Kirkuk Brotherhood List (KBL) met with the Arab Bloc on March 2 to continue negotiations regarding a return of the Turkman Bloc to the Kirkuk Provincial Council following their 14 month absence. This session followed a negotiation meeting held on February 24 (Ref B). While no agreement was signed between the two parties, the March 2 meeting was more productive than the previous session with several points being agreed to in principle by the KBL. Ali Mahdi, the previous lead negotiator for the KBL and largely seen as a destabilizing force by even some Turkman Bloc members, was notably absent from the March 2 session. The next negotiation meeting is scheduled to take place on March 16. The two parties demonstrated real concern to further the political reconciliation process in Kirkuk Province.

KBL AGREES TO FIVE OF SEVEN POINTS

14. (C) Rizgar Ali, Chairman of the Provincial Council and lead negotiator for the KBL, took a conciliatory tone during the meeting and encouraged the Turkman Bloc to sign on the points already in agreement. KBL negotiators used this same tactic to successfully end the Arab Bloc's boycott of the Kirkuk Provincial Council in December 2007. Using this approach, the KBL supported signing on the five points in agreement by the KBL and the Turkman Bloc, leaving the remaining two points for further discussion. The KBL's logic for their approach stems from the desire for both blocs to show forward momentum on the boycott negotiations. However, the Turkman Bloc disagreed questioning the tactic should they fail to agree on the first two points.

15. (U) The Turkman Bloc's proposals include seven points reported reftel. The KBL indicated early during the negotiation that they were prepared to sign an agreement on five of the seven points. These five points are joint administration of government entities, the resolution of contested occupation of public and private property, an ethnically equitable reconstruction program, de-politicization of the provincial reconstruction and development program, and cessation of Turkman DG harassment.

LEGAL GUIDANCE SOUGHT FOR TURKMANI LANGUAGE ON GOVT SIGNS

16. (C) While the KBL was prepared to sign an agreement on the five points, they also agreed "in principal" to the remaining two points. The first point calls for Turkmani to be officially recognized as one of the official languages of Kirkuk Province (along with Kurdish and Arabic.) As a goodwill gesture, the Turkman Bloc called for signs on all government buildings to include the Turkmani language. KBL representatives indicated that they agreed on the importance to recognize the Turkmani language but had problems with ambiguous language within Article four of the Iraqi Constitution. Article four (para 4) indicates that "the Turkoman language and the Syriac language are two other official languages in the administrative units in which they constitute a density of population." KBL representatives want a review of the terms "population density" and "administrative units" by a federal judge in Baghdad. The Turkman Bloc countered that a local judge could provide this interpretation in a more expedient manner. No further progress was made on this point and the Turkman Bloc expressed grave concern on how long such a review by a federal judge could take. In an apparent show of concern, the PC Chairman instructed the Legal Committee to draft a

formal letter to be sent to Baghdad requesting clarification of the terms.

TURKMAN BLOC PUSHES FOR SECOND DEPUTY GOVERNOR NOW

17. (C) The second point agreed to "in principle" by the KBL calls for the Turkman Bloc to be allocated a position of leadership within the provincial government. The Turkman Bloc lobbied for either the position of Governor, Deputy Governor, or Provincial Council Chair. After it became clear that the positions for Governor and Provincial Council Chair were occupied, the Turkman Bloc argued for creating a second Deputy Governor position. The KBL countered that it was prepared to offer the Chairman of the City Council position. The Turkman representatives dismissed this out of hand and continued lobbying for a new Deputy Governor position. This position would be in addition to the Arab Deputy Governor installed in January 2008 as part of the Arab Bloc boycott resolution. KBL representatives indicated that they would support this once the Provincial Powers Law was ratified and gazetted. From their view, the Turkman Bloc would push to immediately install a Turkman into a second Deputy Governor position upon the end of their boycott.

COMMENT

18. (C) While no agreement was signed, it's noteworthy to consider that the two parties are closer to an agreement than might otherwise be indicated. The Turkman have much to gain, especially in regard to joint administration if one considers they represent only 20 percent of the provincial population but stand to gain 32 percent of higher level government positions (i.e. Director General.) The KBL's intention to sign on points three through seven has merit as the two parties could then focus their discussions on the remaining two points. In addition, the two parties could publicly show progress towards an agreement to end the boycott. While not voiced, the KBL is also probably concerned about previous Turkman tendencies to shift demands as negotiations proceed. In fact, from August to October 2007, during a previous

series of negotiation meetings, talks failed when the KBL became frustrated at the Turkman Bloc's tactic of switching and increasing demands as negotiations progressed.

¶9. (C) Ali Mahdi's absence was evident as the two sides negotiated constructively for the first time in these negotiations. Even members of the Turkman Bloc indicated that they seemed to be making more progress without Mahdi. The PRT has encouraged the Turkman Bloc to present other Turkman members to negotiate on behalf of the bloc. Thus far, Mahdi has not proven himself to be a savvy negotiator, instead resorting to lengthy tirades including negative language and accusations. It probably did not help Mahdi's case that following the February 24 session, he resorted to typically caustic language accusing the KBL of not supporting negotiations and the PRT of inaction. Mahdi sees himself as the leader of the Turkman Bloc, although privately six of eight members have voiced their concerns regarding Mahdi's abilities to negotiate. While Mahdi was not present at the day's negotiation session, he still wields considerable influence over the remaining members.

¶10. (C) The Arab Bloc is watching closely from the sidelines and is showing signs of anxiety on the issue of a second Deputy Governor. The KBL-Arab Bloc agreement, signed in December 2007, called for only one Deputy Governor to be installed. Recently, members of the Arab Bloc, as well as the Arab Deputy Governor, voiced their concerns that they will not accept a second Deputy Governor as this would violate the terms of their boycott agreement with the KBL.
END COMMENT.
CROCKER